



Municipality of Anchorage

Office of the Mayor

Ethan Berkowitz, Mayor

January 16, 2018

James Cason
Associate Deputy Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Mr. Cason,

As Mayor of Anchorage, Alaska, I write to express my support for the Native Village of Eklutna's ("NVE") tribal gaming project planned for the Ondola Allotment near Birchwood, Alaska. The Municipality of Anchorage supports the Tribe's goals of economic self-determination and believes both the Tribe and the surrounding community will benefit from the jobs and related economic development the project will bring.

NVE members are Dena'ina Athabascan people who have occupied the upper Cook Inlet region for thousands of years. The Village of Eklutna is the oldest inhabited place in what is now the Anchorage area. It is the closest Indian tribe to Anchorage and, together with Eklutna, Inc., it is a major landowner and important fixture in the local political and cultural landscape.

Despite NVE's rich history and prominent regional status, it has not benefited economically from Alaska's development over the years, and the Tribe continues to have significant needs. Total NVE member unemployment is approximately 35%. Symptomatic of its poor economic situation, NVE relies primarily on grants to fund its operations and to provide vital health and social welfare programs to its members. Approximately 85% of tribal members live at or below the poverty level, and the average annual per capita income is a mere \$11,000. Without the project, there is little hope that the Tribe's situation will improve in the foreseeable future.

The NVE project will create a substantial number of construction jobs, valuable full- and part-time jobs, and as many as 500 new indirect jobs. The facility and its employees will pay applicable taxes.

I have met with NVE Council Member Aaron Leggett, Tribal Administrator Richard Farber, and Eklutna Inc. CEO Curtis McQueen. They explained NVE's plans for a modest class II casino on allotted tribal member land, approximately 20 miles from downtown and 7 miles from Eklutna Village. The allotment is in a commercial-industrial area. I was informed that NVE has met with all members of Alaska's congressional delegation, and I was provided a copy of Congressman Don Young's letter to you strongly endorsing the project.

Given the shared economic development needs of NVE, the Municipality of Anchorage, and State of Alaska, I respectfully urge you to finalize a positive response to NVE's application so that this important project may move forward.

I am happy to discuss this matter with you at your convenience and would welcome the opportunity to express by telephone Anchorage's support for NVE's project.

Sincerely,



Ethan Berkowitz
Mayor, Municipality of Anchorage

Cc: Don Young, Congressman, Alaska
Lisa Murkowski, Senator, Alaska
Dan Sullivan, Senator, Alaska